

**AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO BUILD LEADERSHIP CAPACITY:
INSIGHTS FROM THE FIRST COHORT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
AT THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS**

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In the past several decades, the United States and other countries around the globe have witnessed and participated in unprecedented efforts to interconnect culturally, economically, and socially. As the process of globalization continues to unfold, research questions about educational leadership, that at one time seemed complete within the context of the United States, have now evolved into lines of inquiry that may or may not translate within another nation's educational delivery system. Such is the case when considering educational leadership in The Bahamas.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn what motivated students to enroll in the first formal training program in educational administration in the history of The Bahamas. This research considers the intersections of motivation, career paths, and educational histories of those who live and work in schools in this young nation. Not only does little research exist on student characteristics in educational leadership, there is negligible research on The Bahamian educational delivery system.¹ Because this research focuses on Bahamian educators' motivations to enter a training program for school administrators, it is important to understand, in general, the history and culture of the Bahamian educational system, which currently does not require any formal training for its school administrators.

A Difficult History and the Conundrum of Bahamian Education

The Bahamas consists of a series of islands stretched for almost 600 miles in an archipelago that has a history of resisting political, economic, and cultural unity.

The fractious nature of this young country's society is due to its geography, history, and the cultural revolution that has grown with this nation's recent independence.

The epicenter of The Bahamas is arguably the Island of New Providence - a densely populated tourist haven that houses the seat of the Bahamian Government within the capital city of Nassau. One of this nation's largest employers is its government, with the majority of its civil servants living within the cosmopolitan capital. Conversely, the smaller, less populated, (and more parochial) islands surrounding New Providence still struggle to be referred to informally in Bahamian culture as "Family Islands" rather than the politically charged (and more demeaning) label of "Outer Islands". The clash between the multiple cultures of New Providence and the Family Islands, the top heavy bureaucratic post-colonial government, and the Bahamian nation's comparatively new independence, all significantly contribute to the postmodern conundrum of educating its citizens.

While there is minimal literature that describes the history of the education in these islands (Reid, 1979), it is believed that after 1800, Methodist missionaries attempted to create a system of general education, but were largely unsuccessful because education in this British Colony was primarily the province of the privileged class. The particular significance of the 'education for the privileged' paradigm rests in its proximity to the present day, as The Bahamas gained independence from England in 1973. Like many nations in the Caribbean, the citizens of The Bahamas can trace their families' roots to the plantation slaves oppressed in the 19th century. One year after the Emancipation Act of 1834 freed the slaves in The Bahamas, the British government made a grant of L25,000 for colonial education. In that same year, the Board of Education was established with the Governor of The Bahamas as President. Local commissioners of education were appointed, and a normal training school for teachers was proposed. Despite various attempts to increase the percentage of Bahamians attending school, most members of the population never

benefited from much formal schooling and there was no attempt by the government to sponsor secondary education (Williams, 1970).

E.J. Bowe (1968) summarized the era from slave emancipation to the end of rule by Whites via the 1967 formation of the Peoples Liberal Party (PLP) by stating, "Education had failed to meet the needs of a growing population and to recognize what public education was intended for, beyond establishing a limited personal status for a minority" (p. 200). Craton (1968) further described this bleak historical perspective when he said:

It was perhaps education that the Negroes were worst served (by the whites who inhabited the island) . . . When the Emancipation Act freed the slaves, this added to the problem of providing education for all persons. Because of poverty and indifference, education never kept pace with population increases . . . They (the whites) dominated the majority black population with what really amounted to black despotism until 1967. (p. 210)

Ultimately, Reid (1979) framed the cultural dynamics related to the recording and self reflection of Bahamian history when he wrote, " . . . that the educational history of The Bahamas is shameful, is implicit in the fact that writers of Bahamian history frequently make no mention of education" (p. 6). Urwick (2002) found that even 23 years after Reid's explanation, Bahamians did not like to discuss their educational history as evidenced by the lack of any comprehensive text book about the history of Bahamian education.

The Call for Reform

The failure to address education as a national concern formerly ended in the same year of Bahamian independence from English rule. In 1973, the Bahamian

Ministry of Education and Culture released The White Paper on Education, which heralded institutional changes at the secondary, as well as tertiary, level. A new policy from The White Paper, which strongly reflected a North American influence, was the call to make all government (i.e., public) secondary schools as comprehensive as possible in curriculum and intake, with a strong infusion of vocational studies. Ultimately, the educational system reflects what Dr. Keva Bethel, the former president of The College of The Bahamas has referred to as a “total hybrid” of American and British influences (Reid, 1979, p. 8). For example, the over 40 primary, junior high, and high schools in the government system, for the most part are patterned after North American primary and secondary schools. Additionally, some private secondary schools follow a British model. The College of The Bahamas (COB), established in 1975, reflected this hybridization by offering both the class for credit system and the British based A level examinations and personal tutors.

One of the earliest programs of study created in response to The White Paper at The College of The Bahamas was a Bachelor of Education degree. This entry level introductory program was designed to train teachers and was offered in cooperation with the University of the West Indies. It is ironic that while there had been a strong call for educational reform by The Ministry of Education in 1973, it took 30 years before a formal effort was made to train a cohort of school administrators to facilitate such reforms within the learning communities and campuses of the nation. Adding to the irony of such a slow follow up to the immediate call to action is the fact that school administrators in The Bahamas are not required to earn any sort of license or formal training in school leadership. Additionally, there is no salary incentive from The Bahamian government for those who obtain graduate degrees in educational administration, and students enrolled in this program are required to pay full tuition.

An International Partnership

In the fall of 1998, Kent State University's department of Adult, Counseling, Health, and Vocational Education and The College of The Bahamas built a collaborative partnership in an effort to train school counselors in Nassau. Between 1998 and 2000 there had been a few discussions between the sister institutions about the possibilities of training school administrators, but with little interest on the part of faculty at Kent State University. The addition of new faculty members in the Educational Administration program brought an increased interest in a collaborative school leadership preparation program in Nassau. The new Kent State faculty members cited reasons for interest in this project that were centered on a desire to help address the call for educational reform made by The Bahamian Ministry. This author wrote a partnership proposal, which was presented to the administration of both institutions in the fall semester of 2002. The presidents of both institutions signed a contract of collaboration during the spring semester of 2002. This was the first time in the history of The Bahamas that a formal training program in educational administration was offered on Bahamian soil.

The Cohort Program

At the heart of The Bahamian leadership cohort structure was the 33 graduate hours in educational administration required for a Master's degree in Educational Administration at Kent State University. These hours were to be completed over the course of 2 years and were delivered in a cohort model. The cohort structure was based on the definition of cohorts found in research (Norris & Barnett, 1994; Reynolds & Hebert, 1998; Yerkes, Basom, Norris, & Barnett, 1995). The curriculum delivery model was integral to the cohort approach in that courses and activities for students were developed and offered through a clear program structure dedicated to serving non-traditional students (Barnett, 2004). Cohort identifiers include program efforts geared towards creating and enhancing a

supportive peer group, along with efforts to increase contact with professors outside of class (Norris & Barnett, 1994). Contact in between class meetings was encouraged through email.² Courses included examinations of supervision of instruction, administrative theory, and politics. However, an American school law course was replaced by a course in technology use, as an American law course was seen as irrelevant. Also, faculty members from both universities were unable to find an expert in Bahamian school law qualified or willing to teach a course in Bahamian school law. Because The College of The Bahamas did not employ any faculty members with advanced degrees in educational administration, 8 of 11 required graduate courses were taught by Kent State faculty at the College of The Bahamas campus in Nassau, New Providence. Two technology-based courses were delivered in a team teaching model, with faculty from each university collaborating in the classroom. Cohort members lived for one summer semester on the Kent State University campus and completed three classes (9 hours) in the program's scope and sequence.

In January of 2003, The College of The Bahamas began a campaign to advertise the new graduate program in educational administration in conjunction with Kent State University. Student recruitment efforts on both New Providence and the Family Islands ranged from informational segments on Bahamian radio, television, and newspapers, to a community town hall meeting. Additionally, a series of meetings were held with various school principals, school administrators, and members of the Bahamian Ministry of Education to discuss opportunities, recruitment efforts, and the structure of the educational administration program. Program candidates were screened through a process that began with the creation of a pool of applications that included undergraduate transcripts with a minimum grade point average of 3.5, and two letters of recommendation from professional colleagues. Applicants in this resulting pool were next screened through interviews with a panel

consisting of faculty from both The College of The Bahamas and Kent State University. The panel selected applicants from the interviews that demonstrated a serious commitment to educational leadership. The application, screening, and interview process ultimately resulted in the formation of a cohort consisting of 18 people. Seventeen of the 18 cohort members were women. Courses began in fall semester of 2003 and all 18 students enrolled in the cohort program graduated in the summer of 2005.

Theoretical Framework

Many researchers have examined the process of transitioning from teacher to school leader (Daresh, 2004; Ortiz, 1982; Yerkes et. al., 1995). These examinations have used different lenses ranging from mentoring (Grogan & Crow, 2004) to career path obstacles experienced by aspirants who are members of marginalized groups (Ortiz, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1999). Ultimately, moving from the classroom to the administrative office is viewed as a transformative process (Crow & Glascock, 1993) and part of a predictable career pattern for those who seek greater responsibility and mobility within an organization (Ortiz, 1982).

Very little research examines the beginning of this transformative process, or why people choose educational administration in the first place. According to Young and McCleod (2001), the more general term *aspiration* has been used as the vehicle to discuss the early stages of movement towards a leadership position. However, the discussions about aspiration have focused on how people become school leaders, rather than what motivated them to do so (Young & McLeod, 2001). For example, researchers addressed aspiration within the context of career transition by noting that the early phase of an educational career (when teachers are typically ages 24-30) centers on career building. During this phase, teachers look to define themselves, try on different professional responsibilities, and may become upwardly

mobile (Bruno, 1997). More specifically, Marshall and Kasten (1994) included the concept of motivation with discussions of aspiration when they asked, "What inspires and supports [people who enter school leadership] as they consider entering the profession?" (p. 1). The authors offer a somewhat superficial answer to this question by mentioning a phenomenon they labeled as "A tap on the shoulder" to explain the beginning of the transformative process in which both male and female aspirants might first be motivated to move towards a career in school leadership (1994, p. 6). This moment is described as an epiphany as many educators do not consider a path in school leadership until a principal or superintendent says either in passing or directly to a candidate, "Have you ever thought about becoming a school administrator? You would be a good one." Valverde (1980) described this "tap on the shoulder" as "sponsor identification" and explained that it serves as a sort of signal of the potential for a sponsor-protégé relationship. However, the extent that this moment motivates a teacher to move up the organizational has not been explored.

Within the domain of gender differences and career patterns, research specific to men transitioning into administration has focused on the concept of aspiration without regard to the concept of motivation, and has defined it as primarily moving up within the educational organization (Adkinson, 1981). In terms of women and aspirations to educational leadership, Young and McLeod (2001) looked specifically at dynamics that motivated women to aspire to educational leadership positions. They considered the contextual background of female educators and noted that there are three motivational factors related to women's aspirations to leadership positions within school systems. They are: a) administrative role models, b) exposure to nontraditional leadership, and c) endorsements and support received by aspirants from their surrounding network (p. 496)

It is important to recognize that the research focused on motivation is not only limited in its depth, but it also concentrates on aspiration to educational leadership

positions within the sphere of the school systems within the United States. Thus, the existing research may not translate to this study because in the United States, completion of a graduate level program in educational administration is a requirement to become a principal, while it is not in The Bahamas. Although this effort is related to a small existing framework of literature, it is unique because it considers the intersections of motivation, career paths, and educational histories of those who are working in the Bahamas.

Method of Inquiry

This study is a qualitative investigation of the perceptions of 18 Bahamian graduate students who are the first professionals ever to be formally trained in school administration at a Bahamian institution. Qualitative research is accepted as a viable way to explore and understand social science phenomenon. It is rooted in anthropology and sociology. Various texts have been written on this subject for application in educational environments (Lincoln & Guba, 1988).

One of the most interesting aspects of a qualitative study is that it relates the self as an instrument. This study is not merely checking for behaviors, rather it is my attempt to perceive their presence and interpret their significance. As Peskin (1988) stated, "What counts is the ability to see what counts," meaning inquirers must interrogate how her/his situated perspective influences the ability to "see" (p. 177). Interpretation also pertains to what experience holds for those in the studied situation. Another feature of qualitative study is the use of expressive language and the presence of voices in the text. To experience the text adds to cognition. Because The Bahamas is such a young nation, there exists a rare opportunity to capture the voices of those who witnessed the Bahamian educational system's evolution from the point of view of student, teacher, and in many cases school administrator. These

voices also are from the very pioneers who are committed to changing how Bahamian schools function today and in the future.

Because the intent of this research was to describe and examine, I used an open-ended field study approach. The purpose of the investigation determined the framework for the research methodology, because the research strategy was derived from the problem, the researcher, and the models (Reinharz, 1979). Thus, I selected a naturalistic paradigm was because it provides rich, multidimensional data and a dynamic appreciation of what is. However, the understandings generated from naturalistic studies tend to be in terms of whole, of patterns, or of relationships, and the essence of learning is embedded in the context of the environment. The naturalistic tradition has been used for several studies that explore the career socialization process for practicing and aspiring administrators (Ortiz, 1982, Patterson, 1983, Shakeshaft, 1987, Daresh & Playko, 1995, Turoczy, 1996).

The Bahamian culture, like many other cultures with histories woven in the slave trade and British Colonial rule, is deeply rooted in the oral tradition of storytelling. Thus, individual semi-structured interviews seemed a logical methodology for this study because they are more intimate, less threatening, and more likely to produce the *True-True Bahamian* view of personal histories, goals, as well as The Bahamian educational system. Described as a "conversation with a purpose" (Kahn & Cannell, 1957), in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. Another reason a semi-structured open-ended interview was preferable to other data gathering techniques was that a *True-True Bahamian* knows that sharing one's story is different than offering an opinion in the confines of a class or group activity. As such, I explore a few general topics to help uncover the participant's perspective, but otherwise respect how each participant elected to frame and structure her/his response.

Participant Selection and Description

I began to recruit study participants from a course I taught several months after the students had completed the course.³ During the cohort members' 2004 summer stay at Kent State University's main campus, I made one attempt to recruit interviewees by visiting a class in which the cohort members were enrolled. I briefly explained that I was interested in finding out what motivated students to invest in a graduate program focused on educational leadership in light of the absence of salary benefits and employment requirements connected to such training in The Bahamas. Members of the cohort were next asked to consider volunteering to be interviewed individually in an effort to help answer this question. I also explained to cohort members that volunteering was not mandatory, and that there were no repercussions linked to non-participation in this study. All members of the cohort volunteered and interviews were scheduled.

The data source from this study consisted of all 18 members of the cohort. The participants in this study ranged in age from 24 years old to over 55 years of age. Seventeen of the participants were female, and one was male. For purposes of analysis, participants' interview transcripts were assigned pseudonyms and categorized as either a *Veteran* (those who were over 40 years of age and in the latter stages of their career) or a *Novice* (those who were under 40 years of age and new to their career as teachers). Members of the *Veteran* group included those who were administrators, and those who were teacher leaders. The reason that the age of 40 was selected as a divider was because when the participants ages were plotted out on a chart, the age of 40 appeared to be a natural gap separating the two groups: *Novice* (ages ranging from 24 to 38 years) and *Veteran* (ages ranged from 41 over 55 years of age).

Data Collection

Eighteen individual interviews were audiotape recorded in my office. The tapes were then transcribed verbatim by a transcription service housed at Kent State University with dialog attributed to each speaker. Participants were offered copies of the transcript of their interview for their review. The interview length ranged from 45 minutes to one and one half hours. The four general questions in the interview were: a) What is your age? b) How would you describe your own education? c) Why did you become teacher? and d) Why did you enroll in this program? The only specific questions were related to clarifying the timeline of events in each participant's story.

Data Analysis

I used Glaser & Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method to identify major themes, patterns, and categories. These themes were: 1) educational histories of participants, 2) professional histories of participants, 3) participants' motivation for enrolling in the program and their career goals, and 4) views related to the relationship between men and the education system. The themes were then used as the framework for discussion.

Limitations and Potential Researcher Bias

Limitations of this approach center on interviewees' discomfort and/or unwillingness to share all that the interviewer had hoped to explore, or interviewees may have been unaware of recurring patterns in their lives (Marshall & Grossman, 1994). Additionally, responses to questions may not have been fully comprehended by the author because of various cultural differences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In an effort to quell these limitations, I offered participants the opportunity to conduct a

member check of the final report. None of the participants returned any concerns or requests to change information.

On one final note concerning the choice of methodology, it is important to understand that embarking on a collaboration with The Bahamas required an observance of the caveats of Americanizing the Bahamian educational system, as well as the possibility of presenting an unintentional face of intellectual colonialism (Urwick, 2002; McQueen 1983). Through many interactions with cohort members, I believed that qualitative methods such as open-ended questionnaires and focus group interviews would increase the sense of “being studied” by participants. This apprehension may well be linked to the still recent scars of British colonial rule and an aversion to intellectual colonialism. Behavioral expectations for graduate students, as well as first graders, in Nassau classrooms, have roots deeply embedded in the British education system and is centered on more formal (and thus more guarded) dialogue.

The Critical Eye of The True-True Bahamian

The Bahamian students’ wariness of being judged through an American lens was neatly juxtaposed with a sense of cultural pride and was first evident when I encountered the phrase *True-True Bahamian* during class dialogues. This phrase was used by participants (and other Bahamians) to explain the difference between a nuance, experience, or view of a tourist or local ex-patriot and the nuance, experience, or view of a member of a historic and well-established Bahamian family. Essentially, living in The Bahamas does not mean one *is* Bahamian; even if one has lived in The Bahamas for decades. The phrase *True-True Bahamian* is invoked when trying to confer Bahamian authenticity to an experience or view that outsiders would not recognize. For example, during a Friday night class, I shared that I was feeling very ill and had a fever. The next morning, a student brought to class a large container of an extremely bitter hot tea made of Cerasee, a local plant used in

Bahamian bush medicine. It is a curative for various illnesses that enjoys a cultural provenance and makes it preferable to modern day pharmaceuticals for many Bahamians. In other words, this is the plant that grandmothers and great grandmothers hunt for on the island and then cook into a tea (with other ingredients) for their sick family members. This tea is controversial in Bahamian culture because it is shunned by many as feckless and a symbol of primitive medicinal treatment.

Cerasee is infamously foul, both in taste and smell. However, this brew serves as a cultural vehicle symbolic of pride and independence because it was made and used in complete disregard of the presence of an oppressive British occupation. It is uniquely and totally Bahamian. It is *truly* Bahamian: Made and administered without influence or permission of another culture. Furthermore, Cerasee can not be purchased. It must be made by one who knows the history, flora, and curative traditions of those who lived in The Bahamas long before British Colonization.

When the Cerasee was offered during class, I knew none of its provenance or cultural import. Without hesitation, I drank the entire liter, and to the surprise of the students who remarked, "You're a True-True Bahamian now!" Several weeks after the Cerasee was shared in class, students explained the cultural provenance of Cerasee and the meaning of *True-True Bahamain*. The phrase is one of affirmation, inclusion, cultural pride, and most importantly in this context, trust. This phrase is also used to confer ignorance of a reality in The Bahamas by saying "He doesn't understand, he is not a True-True Bahamian." It is important to note that the moment in which the class shared the Cerasee did not herald a new era of kinship between this author and the members of the cohort. It did, however, mark a shift in the cohort student's willingness to share their opinions about the Bahamian education system with an outsider.

While there is inevitable bias on any researcher's part, it is important to note that it would be incorrect to assume that drinking Cerasee resulted in a loss of objectivity on my part, or that the members of the cohort and I enjoyed a new closer kinship.

Findings

The interviews revealed themes, which form the basis of the reported results and discussion: educational histories of participants, professional histories of participants, participant motivation for enrolling in the program, and participant career goals. This information is concisely presented in Table 1 and Table 2. Interviews also revealed insights concerning the gender based double standard that is part of The Bahamian education system.

Table 1. *Histories and Goals of Veteran Cohort members*

Name	Educational History (Alma Maters)	Professional History	Enrollment Motivation	Career Goal
Gwen	Government High School, University of West Illinois	10 years public teacher, 10 years public principal	To validate current practice	Staff developer for principals
Rebecca	Government High School, American University	30 years teaching in public schools, 5 years public school principal	To learn how to change special education	Politician Education Reformer
Amber	Public High School, American University	31 years teaching public school, 4 th teacher leader private school	To learn current skills	Start church-based vocational school
Ruth	Government High School, American University	27 years teaching public school, 7 years assistant principal public school	Always wanted a Master's Degree	Assistant Principal
Hannah	Private High School, International University	26 years teaching public school, 4 years Assistant Principal public school	Validate current practice	Assistant Principal
Sonya	Private High School, American University	10 years public school teacher, 12 years Department Chair private	Learn leadership skills	Principal of Family Island school
Portia	Private High School, College of the Bahamas	10 years teaching private, 2 years principal at private school	Grow professionally, love learning new things	Continue as principal
Joan	Public High School, College of the Bahamas	19 years teaching public school	Life long learner	Principal
Coco	The Government High School, American University	16 years teaching public school, 3 years principal public school	Life long learner	Stay a principal

Table 2. Histories and Goals of Novice Cohort members

Name	Educational History (Alma Mater)	Professional History	Enrollment Motivation	Career Goal
Jillian	Private High School, American University	8 years private school teacher	The principalship paves the way to political office	Political Office
Alexa	Public High School, American University	2 years public high school teacher	Learn administration skills	Start computer center on a Family Island
Leighton	The Government High School, College of the Bahamas	8 years teaching public school	Learn administration skills	Public school principal
Georgia	The Government High School, American University	17 years teaching public school	To impact direction of school	Assistant principal
Helena	The Government High School, American University	8 years teaching public school, 7 years public school ,Dept head	Credentials necessary for principalship	Principal then faculty at College of the Bahamas
Fonda	Private High School, International University	9 years teaching private school	Learn leadership skills	Principal public school
Naomi	Public high school, College of the Bahamas	7 years teaching public school	Learn leadership skills	Principal then faculty at College of the Bahamas
Carol	Private High School, American University	9 years teaching private school, 3 years Department head private school	Learn leadership skills	Open tutoring center
Janice	Public High School, College of the Bahamas	11 years private school teacher	Learn leadership skills	Open tutoring center

Educational Histories

Prior to enrollment in the Educational Administration program, 4 of the 18 people interviewed in this study were teachers trained at The College of the Bahamas. The majority (11 of 14) of the remaining participants completed undergraduate training at various American universities, and 3 cohort members attended international universities. Some participated in satellite programs offered in a location that was geographically close to, or in, The Bahamas, such as programs at St. Benedict's College or Florida International University. Others were full-time students on the campuses of institutions as far away as Texas A&M University. All participants noted that their selection of a university for undergraduate training was based more on convenience and location, rather than the public or private status of a university. Status seemed to be a more important factor in participants' secondary school experiences. This pattern emerged when participants described the political and cultural networks related to a public high school in Nassau called The Government High School. Of the 13 participants who spent their childhood living in Nassau, 6 went to The Government High School and 7 went to different private high schools in Nassau.

The Government High School is a public institution that was built before Bahamian independence in 1973. During the British Colonial period, this high school served mostly Black Bahamians. Its original purpose, determined long before the Bahamian independence of 1973, was to serve the sons and daughters of Bahamian civil servants and ultimately groom them to become cultural envoys between the different communities of people living in The Bahamas. The prestige enjoyed by those involved at The Government High School was based on the understanding that the student population was considered to be the best and brightest in The Bahamas. The Government High School is described this way by Coco, a member of the *Veteran* group:

I went to The Government High School when it was similar to a private school because you had to take an examination in order to attend. I would say a good amount of people who are the movers and shakers . . . the policy makers come from The Government High School . . . Most of the people who attend are middle to upper class. And now you don't have to take an examination to get in, but in my time you did,

When asked if it was a "big deal" to be an alumni of The Government High School, *Veteran* group member Gwen said:

Yes . . . it is because you see it was the first government high school after we gained independence in 1973. And I was in the class of 1973, so we were the important ones. We have quite a few people from that class doing extremely well. We have surgeons and magistrates, lawyers, and accountants . . . We all know each other from the neighborhood. The Minister of Education is a friend of mine from that time. I hadn't seen him for years, and he came to my school on business, and I extended my hand, and he just knocked it out of the way to give me a big hug instead. And the school director just looked at me like 'How do you know him?' When the Minister left, my boss said to me that I was not supposed to hug the Minister, and I told her that I did not hug the Minister; the Minister hugged *me*. I saw the minister later that month in a parking lot and he was not in his official car, so I told him about what my boss said. He said, 'Now let me tell you something, you go tell her when we were playing marbles and shooting marbles and things, they ain't been nowhere near there.' So the old days do mean something.

Pedigree related to The Government High School is not exclusive to the *Veterans*. *Novice* Allison described the importance of The Government High School this way:

When I went it had just changed from being a semi-private school to a full public school that would provide the same level of education to the masses. It was really quite the thing. Many of the folks who run things here are from there.

For many, The Government High School represented a benchmark in the country's history when both the political framework, and educational delivery system, moved to a paradigm based on equality. While it is not the only source point of networks among professional Bahamians, The Government High School also appeared to be the progenitor of networks for Bahamians involved in the island's post-independence politics.

Professional Histories

The data also revealed patterns in the professional histories of the *Veteran* and *Novice* participants. A majority (7 of 9) of the *Veterans* are currently serving as school administrators. Of these 7 administrators, 5 are public school administrators. All 5 of these administrators are graduates of a Bahamian public school with the most commonly named alma mater being The Government High School.

None of the *Novices* are school principals, although 2 serve in quasi-leadership positions such as Head of Department. Five *Novices* are employed in public schools, and 4 are employed in private schools. Four of the 5 *Novices* that graduated from a public school are currently teaching in public school. The remaining 3 *Novices* are graduates of private schools; some teach in public schools and some

teach in private schools. There is no specific grade level (primary, junior high, or high school) in which a majority of cohort members work.

Motivation for Entering the Program and Career Goals

Unlike the United States, school administrators in The Bahamas are not required to possess an advanced degree in educational administration. Veteran group member Coco explained the qualifications for hire as a school principal:

All you need is your bachelor's degree and your 10 years experience and you're eligible for the interview. Now that does not mean you will pass the interview and get the job . . . But you are eligible. The Ministry of Education does not do the hiring. We have another ministry that is responsible for hiring and training all civil servants. So the team of people doing the interview may not all be educators. But the Ministry of Education has a representative at the interview.

The Novices had less experience and were not yet principal but the *Veterans* had extensive experience levels and obvious career attainment. With no official requirement to have an advanced degree to hold the position, I wondered what would motivate these educators to embark on such an extensive journey of professional development at such a late point in their careers with so little obvious reward.

The Veterans

Intrinsic motivators, ranging from a sense of increased self-esteem to validation of the choices they were making while serving in the administrative role, were the most frequently expressed reasons behind enrollment for the *Veteran* group. Others expected an increased sense of self, simply because they had always

wanted a Master's degree and had abandoned the challenge in order to fulfill spousal duties, such as traveling with their husband or raising children. Hannah described her motivation in these terms:

My main reason was to validate what I was doing . . . I knew I would be able to measure where I was doing and to see what was current. I think as a principal I should be a life long learner. I wanted to be sure that whatever I was doing was the right thing and if it wasn't right, then I could fix it and train teachers the right way. Seeing if I was doing the right thing that was in alignment with the trends in education would help me be a better leader.

Ruth said:

When I graduated from undergraduate school I was only 20 years old, and I wanted to do the masters. I had a scholarship but it was better for me to go home and live with my mother. So I could not stay and do it. And now my husband is fussing at me sayin' (sic), 'You are 4 years from retirement, why are you spending all this money?' And I say to him, 'Because this is for me, it is for *my* satisfaction. It has nothing to do with the job. It is for me.'

Career goals were not a factor for 5 of 9 *Veterans* who stated that they were exactly where they wanted to be in life and believed they had reached their career goals. They also spoke of the intrinsic motivators related to self-esteem as mentioned above. The remaining four enrolled in the program to validate their current practices and to pursue ultimate career goals that ranged from running a school on a Family Island to becoming a government official. The career goals were squarely centered on efforts to serve their country in terms of filling a void they

identified within the educational system. In the words of *Veteran* Joan, "I am doing this because my country needs me. Eventually, I think it would be nice to run a school on a Family Island." Gwen, a *Veteran* who has earned a reputation as an effective school principal was more specific:

I would like to be a trainer, or a trainer of trainers, and work with these principals in the field. Because very often, even after a college degree, people may not know how to get the job done when the realities of administration set in. I would like to be able to give seminars and trainings through our principal association. I think I would be helpful as a trainer of trainers to help focus on professional development.

Another *Veteran*, Amber, identified and wanted to fill a different kind of void:

In 10 years, I would really like to be in a church running a school for students who are not academic, need to be challenged, and who come out of school with no skills. I want to teach them how to cook, or to clean; so they can go into the hotels and be a maid or bake cakes. My school would be for those older than high school age so they could have some kind of job in the morning and then come to my school in the afternoon for training in a vocation. Then these children would not fall in the cracks and be lost. They would have a job and a life too.

Rebecca, who currently serves as a school administrator, and is frustrated with the inequities she sees, explains her political aspirations this way:

I did this because I want to help the children in the special education schools. Things need to be changed there. I want to work in The Ministry [of Education]. I am hoping that in the near future I would be in a position that would supervise all the special education schools.

For *Veterans*, the pleasure and importance of graduate school rested in its validation of the choices made throughout a career. These educators who had already achieved status as teacher leaders and school administrators viewed the cohort experience as a way to hone skills they deemed necessary to deepen their contributions to The Bahamian education system - contributions centered on improving the quality of life for fellow Bahamians.

The Novices

Members of the *Novice* group had a different set of motivators, as well as goals. There were no practicing administrators in this group. On average, members of this group had been in the classroom teaching for 7 years, and saw enrollment in the Master's Degree in Educational Administration program as a step necessary to help them achieve their goals. In total, 4 *Novices* mentioned the principalship as a career goal, with 2 mentioning a preference for a public school. Leighton, the only male member of the cohort, said:

I want to do this because I want to give back to the public schools. I feel like the support I got when I went to school made a big difference in my life, and I want to give back to the young men and women who could benefit the same way I did.

Fonda's goal as a school principal is also rooted in the idea of giving back to her community. She said:

I enrolled in this program thinking if I ever got out of education, I would at least have the leadership skills to help me somewhere else. But then I realized my goal is to become a principal of an all age school on a Family Island. Give me a small school in the hatch. It would be nice to get a pay increase but I chose this path in order to be an expert in my area so I can help my people.

Of the Novice principal aspirants, 2 of 4 viewed school leadership as a necessary bridge to becoming a faculty member for The College of The Bahamas. The 5 *Novices* that did not aspire to become principals of existing schools saw themselves as entrepreneurs. Three of the 5 *Novices* wanted to start, own, and manage learning centers. Alexa's reflection best represent this group of entrepreneurial educators:

I didn't really want to be a school administrator, but what I wanted to do is own my own computer learning center on one of the Family Islands. I got the idea from my Mom. She asked me to teach her how to use the computer. You know, if I can teach my Mom this, I can teach anyone. Even though technology is changing every day, it is my pride and joy, and I would like to share what I know. I was able to make my proposal in one of my classes. So when I graduate I can submit it to The Ministry of Education and see if I can get funding.

The most unique perspective among the *Novices* belonged to Jillian, who shared that education was not a professional calling for her, but rather a vehicle to launch her

political career. Unlike her *Veteran* colleague Rebecca, who aspires to use political office to move a specific agenda (special education), Jillian shared that her desire to hold political office was not necessarily related to an educational agenda. She said:

I was asked by my former principal to teach at my alma mater. It didn't take long for me to realize that I was not going to be in that position very long, just a teacher. I wanted to be where decisions were being made and the principalship is a powerless place. To really mobilize change and go further I need to serve in public office. Inevitably that's where I'm going to be.

Novices understood the cohort program as an opportunity to acquire a skill set that would allow them to pursue innovative endeavors that would serve Bahamians, as well as create a niche market in the Bahamian educational system. The *Novices'* desire to contribute is rooted more strongly in a desire to meet an unanswered need in areas where there is little to zero capacity in terms of educational leadership. These goals include: starting a tutoring center or technology school, and increasing the faculty workforce at The College of The Bahamas.

Men and the Educational System

The most prominent demographic of this study centered squarely on gender. Of the 18 members of the cohort, only 1 was male and under the age of 40. The unbalanced ratio of men to women in the cohort mirrors the unbalanced representation of gender in the Bahamian schools. When asked about the disproportionately small number of men who are educators, all 18 mentioned salary as the primary factor. Leighton explained:

I think it is because men think a lot about families and providing for them.

When you compare education to other trades like tourism, or accounting, the salaries go farther in the other places. When I decided to go into this, I knew I would not be making as much as my other friends. But I am here because of the profound affect my coach had on me. And I want to do the same for our young men.

All participants agreed that professions with the highest salaries in The Bahamas are found in the tourist, hospitality, and banking industries. Additionally, the highest paying jobs were usually located in the capital of New Providence. Thus, men, who remain the primary providers in most Bahamian families often sought to be educated in a field other than education and move to (or remain in) New Providence. Several participants inferred that the salary (or lack thereof) also contributed to the lack of status of the education profession, when compared to higher salaried careers.

Sonya, a *Veteran*, explained it this way:

I feel that a lot of men feel pressure because they are looked at as the bread and butter of the family. So they want a job with some clout, some money. And women, they look more at the students and the changes they can make. That is another reason why we lose men. They get in the job and realize they can't cut it because of the pathetic salary, so they leave for better jobs instead of waiting to move up.

Despite the dominance of women in the Educational Administration program, Bahamian culture is resistant to the idea of women being able to effectively manage a school. Ironically, one of the icons of postcolonial educational reform is Kevel Bethel, a woman who was the president of The College of The Bahamas. The

majority of participants in this study explained that student discipline and organizational management are seen as essentially male-related talents in Bahamian culture. Men are also viewed as more effective and desirable principals because they are physically stronger than women. Gwen, a *Veteran* who is currently serving as a principal, explained the intersections of gender bias and the educational system this way:

I think a lot of boys and men tend to always think 'I don't need an education . . . I can do well because I wear the pants'. And so you see young men in the high school guys do well to a certain point, and then they just decide this is the end of it. Why? Because school is for women. And so they don't want to go to school and I think our society and made them like that. You find a lot of them will go out of high school and go into the banks and get a teller position.

At the same time a female will get a teller position and within 6 months maybe they have the same qualifications and the guy goes to the top. And the lady has to struggle. We always go back to school to prove ourselves. It doesn't work that way for the men. So a lot of them don't go to school because there is a notion in our society they will rise to the top. And because the men have been doing it for so long, they don't need to go into this training or that graduate program. They are going to get there anyway. And if the boy for some strange reason chooses to be a teacher education, well, he is a hero isn't he? We need him to help our students see. And so it seems natural that this man would quickly become a principal because he is such a rare gem.

Several participants noted that the scarcity of men in the education profession contributes to the sense of their value, and in turn, ability to ascend more easily than

women to positions of school leadership. Helena, another *Novice* further explains the reasons why a double standard exists in terms of gender and school leadership:

Because there are so few of men in our profession, they move up quickly because they are like a prize, you see. So they move up even over more qualified people because The Ministry wants to keep them. Because our communities think a man is better because he is stronger than a woman. As if I can't control a child because I am a woman!

All participants identified a need for more males in the education system, particularly as role models. Furthermore, participants explained that The Ministry of Education is challenged to bring men into their workforce because salaries in educational positions are lower than in other career tracks. Sixteen of the 18 participants interviewed noted a gender bias related to mobility in Bahamian schools that may be due to the higher value placed on men who work in school because of their perceived influence on boys, or the existing belief that being male makes one a better disciplinarian, and therefore, a more effective leader.

Discussion

This study revealed patterns of participant responses that could be separated into two categories (*Veterans* and *Novices*) according to age, career trajectory, and motivations for enrollment. The *Veterans* (those nearing the sunset of their career) *enrolled* in the program to meet intrinsic desires, such as the validation of professional practice, or the satisfaction of earning an advanced degree. The *Novices* (those new to the profession) saw enrollment as another step toward completing career goals ranging from political office to more entrepreneurial efforts such as opening learning centers. The heartfelt

desire to leave a legacy that would impact generations of learners in Bahamian schools was a palpable and overarching motivation for both subgroups in the cohort.

It is important to mention that the overwhelming majority (17 out of 18) of cohort members spoke passionately of their preference, and commitment, to remain in and work in The Bahamas; some on Family Islands and some on New Providence. The sense of Bahamian pride and nationalism was evident regardless of age, career aspiration, or professional position. It is best illustrated by Joan, a *Veteran*, who said, "I am doing this because my country needs me." It appears that this cohort has the potential to change the culture and fabric of education in The Bahamas because of its members' political network and demonstrated willingness to think beyond the current delivery structure in terms of creating new kinds of schools. Participants also mutually identified one of the source points of postcolonial networks in and among Bahamian politicians and professionals as The Government High School, an institution built long before Bahamian independence that continues to serve families today.

Perhaps the most interesting perspectives to come out of this study center on the relationship between Bahamian men and the education system of this young nation. Because salaries in education are low in comparison to other professional career paths, and because men are promoted over women who have more education in Bahamian society, men tend to choose careers that are not in education. The men who choose to enter the education profession in The Bahamas find themselves with an advantage in terms of upward mobility, because they are a rare commodity, and there is an unspoken belief that males are more effective disciplinarians, and therefore better principals. The resulting high demand for males, coupled with the nonexistent requirements for formal training in educational administration, appears to perpetuate a system in which it is understood that men will rise to the top of a profession regardless of their training.

Although the lack of gender equity in schools is not a new phenomenon in the United States (Shakeshaft, 1987, 1999; Sherman, 2005), it has not been documented within the

context of The Bahamian education system. In terms of motivation, Young and McLeod (2001) mentioned that exposure to nontraditional leadership roles served as a primary motivator for women in the United States who entered the profession of educational administration, but they did not address if motivators in the United States included aspirants' desire to open their own charter or private school. This research found that motivations for Bahamian *Novices* and *Veterans* were related to an entrepreneurial desire to open a school. An interesting future focus of research may be the examination of intersections between entrepreneurship and selection of educational administration preparation programs.

Lastly, it is important to note that the third primary motivator listed for American women who choose to enter educational administration were the "endorsements and support received by an aspirant from their surrounding network" (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 496). In the context of this study, *The Veterans*, all of who were women, did mention endorsement as a motivating factor, only in a different way. These Bahamian women, many of whom were already practicing administrators, saw ownership of a graduate degree in educational administration as an endorsement of their abilities to lead.

Conclusions

The findings of this study provide a complex understanding of the intersections of motivation, career paths, and educational histories supporting Bahamian educators' decisions to enter a degree program in educational administration. Not only does this research address an underexplored area within the realm of administrative preparation, it also explores the notion of motivation within the context of a national school system rarely examined in the literature.

The beginning of this article noted that politicians and educators in The Bahamas cited a desire to 'build capacity' as the reason for instituting the Master's degree program in educational administration at The College of The Bahamas. This desire is in alignment

with the literature that describes how cohort programs have been identified as a vehicle to increase the pool of viable school leaders in the United States, The United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (Barnett, et. al., 2000; Bottoms, 2001; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Turoczy, 1996).

And while cohort members' strong sense of commitment fits well within the stated goal of 'building capacity' articulated by The Bahamian Ministry of Education, there are deeper issues that should be considered in terms of the relationship between the government's desire to build capacity and the goals of cohort members. For example, a majority of the *Novices* did not voice a desire to serve as leaders in the existing public or private schools. These students instead preferred the idea of creating their own school or becoming faculty at The College of The Bahamas. This phenomenon begs for Bahamians to consider the definition of "building capacity". If "building capacity" means to improve existing public and private schools through formally trained leaders, then the cohort program should be contoured to fit such goals.

There is a recognized need for men to serve as role models in Bahamian schools because education is not seen as a necessity for men to gain employment or promotion in many levels of Bahamian society. This observation confirms the work of Hamilton and Orton-Wallace (2000) who noted, "American educators as well as those in the Caribbean note that Black boys are fast becoming the second sex in schools. That is, that the academic attainment levels and motivation of these boys start to decline during the elementary grades" (p. 19).

Additionally, participants reported the existence of a gender based double standard in the educational system. Within the context of the American educational delivery system, double standards affecting women in school administration have been well documented (Ortiz, 1982; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1991, 1992, Blount & Tallerico, 2004). And while issues of equity for women in education have come to the forefront of national discussions within the

last 30 years in the United States (Grogan, 1999; Rusch, 2004); the same cannot be said about discussions centered on the educational delivery system in The Bahamas.

Another noteworthy revelation from this data is that men, considered the primary wage earners in Bahamian families, are motivated to take positions in professions other than education because of issues of salary parity. Cohort members expressed their understanding of a subtle cultural view that men are stronger disciplinarians, and therefore more effective school leaders simply by virtue of their gender. All of these factors contribute to a social paradigm that enables the few men working in Bahamian schools to ascend quickly into positions of leadership, but because of the low salary parity, relatively few enter the education profession.

National discussions about gender equity in the United States education system over the last 30 years has changed the face of school leadership in terms of gender and what is culturally acceptable in terms of who leads schools (Pounder, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1987; Grogan, 1999). When considering that Bahamians do not easily engage in reflections on the history or dynamics of their educational system (Urwick, 2002), the insights offered in this research in terms of motivation demonstrate their acumen and commitment to creating change within the educational system. However, it is worth noting that the *Novices* and *Veterans* desire to lead in arenas other than public schools may be related to the Bahamian Ministry's gender bias in terms of hiring principals for their public schools. In essence these leaders are looking to change the face of educational leadership and break a hegemonic culture by building their own schools rather than trying to fight for a change in hiring practices.

Because there is currently no monetary reward for those educators who have advanced degrees in educational administration, serious consideration should be given to "building capacity" through the benefits of salary motivations and preference for those people applying for administration positions who have formal training in educational

leadership. Those involved in the Bahamian education system should recognize and consider these steps toward requiring training for school leaders.

Furthermore, there is a need for a gender balanced recruitment and promotion of teachers and administrators in Bahamian schools. A long-term and global investment should be made towards school and community based efforts to help Bahamian families see the value of education for both boys and girls. While there is clearly a passion voiced for improving the educational system in the Bahamas, the views and goals of the first generation of trained administrators demonstrate that there is a need to consider what “building capacity” means within the context of the historic vision created by the White Paper on Education, as well as for the future of Bahamian schools.

NOTES

1. A search of the Sage publications website, JSTOR, and ERIC revealed only Young's 1994 article focused on motivating factors affecting American women's decisions to enter into school administration. Furthermore, a search of the Sage publication website, JSTOR, and ERIC revealed only one article that mentions The Bahamas in passing while discussing international economic policy models and their relationship to the purpose of education.
2. While professors made efforts to build relationships with cohort students via email and outside the context of the classroom, these opportunities were not necessarily taken advantage of by students. It is important to recognize that within Bahamian culture, students and teachers enjoy, and seek to preserve, very formal and one dimensional relationships: This cultural practice, in conjunction with wariness to non Bahamians teaching classes about leading Bahamian schools, lead to an evident social distance between the graduate students and the professors. For example, while students would graciously volunteer to transport a professor back to their hotel after a long day's class, the students would not seek to interact socially with the professor during the day (such as sharing a lunch break) as that was seen as an infringement of the professors' status as classroom instructor. Additionally, unlike graduate classrooms at Kent State University, students were reluctant to share details of their personal lives and work experiences during classroom discussions. This proved to be challenging for the professors who were trying to build mentoring relationships, or help students weave knowledge from a lesson within the contextual framework of their own lives.
3. This author taught the first course in the cohort's scope and sequence, which began in the fall of 2003. The course was delivered on the Nassau campus of

The College of The Bahamas. After the course was completed, students did not contact or interact with the author until she engaged in the summer semester recruitment effort described. Students did not take any other courses from the author. The only other extent of her interactions with students was the coordination of a school sight visits in Ohio and participation in the commencement ceremonies in Nassau, Bahamas.

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